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FLOOR DEBATE

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a patrol car. Having the counties continue to house because the state won't is expensive. Just last month, there were 41 "postcommitment" days at a cost of \$450 a day, or a total of over \$18,000 that the state should have paid in February. Last year the total cost was for 291 "postcommitment" patients, and that cost was about \$216,000. The services for June 2001, and billed in July 2001, a new fiscal year, was \$51,000 and change. Since this was a new fiscal year, the attitude seemed to be we no longer owe the money. The counties have already taken one reduction in state aid in a special session of about 4 percent for Fiscal Year '02, and 5 percent in Fiscal Year '03. Now they're looking at probably further cuts. The cuts for Lancaster County amounted to about \$56,000 with this state aid reduction, which over a year could probably be absorbed, but the \$51,000 that was due in just one month is almost as much as the county is supposed to be taking as a cut for the entire year. The state has said that they would pay these costs with a few certain stipulations--that the Crisis Center provide the treatment. Well, again, the Crisis Center is not a treatment facility, nor does it have the personnel or licenses to do the treatment. It would have to hire someone, and then there would be no beds available for emergencies. If the crisis centers would treat, there would be no incentive for the state to find a bed for these people, and there still would be no beds available in the Crisis Center. We're back to the backseat of a patrol car. At last year's hearing, Ron Ross said, we don't have room. I was later told by others that, rather, the facilities are understaffed and so they're not operating at full capacity. It still equates to we don't have room. I can appreciate the state is cutting costs, but let's not be doing it at the expense of the counties. If the state has no room and no money, neither do the counties. Because of increased "postcommitment" days, the Crisis Center has increased costs of its own in overtime and increased maintenance because of overcrowding. Also, there have been increased liability costs. At least one patient, a Ralph Navarette, a sexual perpetrator, was committed to the regional center on October 28, 1999, by the board of mental health. He remained at the Crisis Center and did not receive treatment. He sued the county and then the county had to pay both sides of the battle if he was indigent. Just before the district court trial, a bed was miraculously found, and he was moved on